

Borealis

by Wilfre

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Summary: Chell has escaped Aperture and found herself in a strange new world. A world of challenges and characters, both new and old. Takes place after Portal 2 and Half-Life 2 Episode 2.

## 1. Chapter 1

Chell breathed in the crisp, cool air as she looked at the sun overhead. Free at last, she thought as she smiled to herself. An unexpected feeling of nostalgia washed over her. She had no idea where this feeling came from, as she had no memory of her life before Aperture. This was odd, but it hardly mattered. She was free. The wheat field itself was quite impressive. It extended for miles and Chell could see no end to it. She turned around and was startled by what she saw. A structure that looked like an ordinary shed stood behind her. Surely this could not be the gateway to the Hell she had just escaped from. Well, not exactly escaped, more like let go. Let go. Another odd thing. Even if it appeared that Caroline was helping GLaDOS regain a scrap of humanity, this was so. un-GLaDOS that it started to worry Chell. Could this be another trap? What was that? Chell turned her head and barely caught a glimpse of a flash in the distance. Was it the flash of a turret gun? The reflection of an uncovered panel? There it was again. And again. A strange smell hit Chell. It almost smelled like smoke. The flashes were fire. The blaze started to surround Chell as she began to cough from smoke inhalation. She turned back to the shed only to see it dissolve into a cloud of neurotoxin. Her blood turned to ice as she heard a malevolent chuckle reverberating from what seems like the earth itself, mocking her, taunting her helplessness. Chell tried to scream as a giant pit opened beneath her, causing her to fall directly into the bowls of Android Hell where millions of mantis-men were just waiting to devour her ripe, juicy, flesh.

Chell jerked herself out of her sleep, her body drenched with cold sweat. She looked out the window of her abandoned apartment. The sky was gray, as usual. Chell groaned inwardly as she realized that it was already midmorning. She cursed herself silently for sleeping in.

Civil Protection would be out already and the small window of opportunity Chell would have used to grab some food had closed. Looked like she was dining on stockpiled rations today. As Chell crawled out of the sunken mattress she used for a bed she heard her radio squawk. That meant she her system had detected Combine or Resistance transmissions concerning her area. Chell groaned inwardly again as pulled on her jumpsuit and long- fall boots. More bad news. According to the transmission the Resistance would be trying to take back the district today. Chell currently lived in the top floor of a large apartment building in largely ignored Combine territory. The building was abandoned and there was already a working CCTV system installed. All she had to do was hook it up to a propane generator she had liberated from a Combine warehouse. She placed a few secondary defenses against the scavengers in the less maintained Combine districts and had herself a half-decent living space. She walked over to her workbench where there were various microchips, blueprints, custom weapons, and other projects scattered around. Chell settled into the familiar rhythm of tinkering, testing functions, and tinkering some more. The irony of her love of machines was not lost on her, considering what she had been through. She started wondering about her dream, but immediately stopped herself. Thinking about it would do no good. Chell had long since given up on trying to understand her dreams. She always felt conflicted whenever she thought about Aperture. It was ridiculous that she even consider doubting its cruelty after all it had done to her, but still, she couldn't help feeling some attachment to that place. Maybe it was Stockholm's Syndrome, or maybe it was because the Combine's grip on the planet was still so strong that Aperture is the one place that remained untouched by the Combine. Or at least that's what Chell kept telling herself.

Chell tore herself away from the thoughts she had so many times before and resumed work on her projects. It seemed that this was all she did lately. Well, this and steal some supplies from nearby Combine supply depots when she could get to it. She couldn't do it today though. Civil Protection would be out patrolling already and the chances of getting caught were high. She didn't want to jeopardize her "freedom." Chell chuckled darkly to herself. Freedom was a joke. Maybe she would have been better off in GLaDOS had just killed her.

\_"If you want my advice, you should just lie down in front of a rocket. Trust me. It'll be a lot less painful."\_

\_"GLaDOS, you have no idea how right you were,"\_ Chell thought to herself as she thought back to that day. But she immediately scolded herself for wanting to take the easy way out. That was what made her special. She never gave up.

Resuming work on her projects, Chell tested the functions of a particularly tricky weapon she was building. She didn't know where her knowledge of machines came from, or why she was inexplicably drawn to working with them. There were a lot of things she didn't know about herself, such as why she was mute, her own last name, or even how she wound up in the Hellhole known as Aperture Science. She was frustrated by her lack of knowledge about herself. She knew that her physical abilities, problem-solving skills, and knowledge of machines far surpassed a normal person, but that was about it. Even the fact that she knew what a normal person could be was a mystery, as she had never encountered a normal person long enough to discover

anything. The only experiences she had with other people were fleeting glances of refugees or when she snuck past Civil Protection. As for before Aperture, Chell's memory was as blank in that area as in any other. The first thing she could recall for certain was waking up in the relaxation vault with GLaDOS instructing her from hidden speakers.

Maybe Wheatly was right. Maybe she did have brain damage. Wheatly. Oh, how she missed him. Even though he tried to kill her in the end she still wished she could hear his enthusiastic voice again. She felt a similar relationship to him as she did with most Aperture technology.

She really needed to stop getting sidetracked. Chell resumed work on her projects. It was at that moment when all hell broke loose.

## 2. Chapter 2

Gordon stared at into the coffin where his friend lay. He could barely believe it. His lifelong colleague, mentor, and not to mention friend, was dead. It was unthinkable. He had fought his way to Xen and back, single-handedly killed the Nihilanth, taken down the very heart of Combine rule, just to be completely helpless as a psychokinetic space worm murdered one of his closest friends. Thank god for DÃ~G. If it hadn't intervened that advisor would have killed him and Alyx. Gordon sighed and glanced over at her. Freeman knew that whatever he was going through, it must have been a hundred times worse for Alyx. Alyx had become withdrawn, speaking not much more than Gordon himself. Her accuracy plummeted in the mandatory hour of target practice, and she barely ate. Gordon turned back to the coffin as the scientist part of him offhandedly wondered exactly what would happen today. The vortigaunts promised to "give the Eli Vance a proper release to the Vortessence."

Almost everyone was gathered around Eli's coffin in the outdoor pavilion as some of Eli's team said a few words or silently paid respects. Most of the vortigaunts were standing around silently, possibly giving respect in their own way. Gordon noticed Dr. Kleiner heading up to the coffin with Dr. Magnusson and got Alyx's attention. They both quietly sat down and several others followed suit. Kleiner began his speech, telling what Eli's role in the starting the Resistance, saving refugees in City 17, establishing the vorts as allies, and even diving into what role Eli played at Black Mesa. He left nothing out. That, combined with Eli's friendship with most of them, made for very few dry eyes. Gordon though he even saw Magnusson's eyes get a little misty. Gordon glanced over at Alyx, at first taken aback. She was staring straight on, stoic faced. But then Gordon noticed the small quiver in her lips, her clenched fists, and thousand yard stare, and he knew that she was just barely keeping it together. He respectfully turned his attention back to Kleiner, who then reached the end his speech and rejoined the crowd. All the vortigaunts turned and started moving up towards the coffin. Magnusson's personal vortigaunt assistant, Uriah, led them. An even heavier silence passed through the crowd as all the vortigaunts made it to the stage. Uriah put his arms over Eli's body, and it seemed as if even the wind was holding its breath. Uriah began to chant and the others quickly joined in. He began to wave his hands over Eli's coffin. The wind suddenly picked up and the space around Eli got brighter. It actually appeared that it was Eli's body that was

glowing. Eli started giving off points of light reminiscent of ones Gordon hadn't seen since the Resonance Cascade. Eli actually appeared to be dissolving with the light, and Gordon could now see that whatever the lights lit up was immediately gone. He had no idea what was happening, but he knew it must be sacred. The vorts held Eli high in their society, as he was the first one to attempt contact with them. About a third of Eli's body was gone now, and the vortigaunts started picking up speed. In a few moments, all that remained in Eli's coffin were his clothes and his artificial leg.

The crowd seemed to let out its breath all at once, and the vortigaunts rejoined the crowd. Magnusson strode to the empty coffin, and the crowd seemed to awake from their daze. "Well that wasâ€¦ um, something." Magnusson said weakly. "Now, back to work."

The crowd dispersed and Gordon took Alyx back to her room. They sat down on her cot and Alyx stared at the ground. Gordon, unsure of what to do next, started wrapping his arm around Alyx. She resisted at first, but soon gave in and then clutched to it tightly. She started sobbing uncontrollably and pressed up against Gordon.

"He's really gone," she started. "I can't believe he's really go-" Alyx froze midsentence. Surprised, Gordon tried to look over at her but he felt as if he were moving through molasses. The room was suddenly darker and an eerie purple light started emanating from nowhere. "Oh no," Gordon thought as he turned his attention directly in front of him. Sure enough there he was standing there, looking no different than he would if he was standing at a bus stop, instead of an alien apocalypse.

"Doctor Freeeeeeman," he began, "I realize that you have been through much in the past few days, and that you might be hoping for some reprieve. Unfortunately, there is still much to be done, and so few people to do it." The scene suddenly shifted to something that looked like another resistance outpost. "The chopper that Miss Vance has so courteously set up will be adequate transportation for what I have in mind. Do not fail." And then he was gone. The world started up again and Alyx resumed sobbing, completely unaware of what just transpired.

A resistance soldier burst into the room, and both Alyx and Gordon looked up.

"Sorry to disturb you," he said, "but Dr. Freeman, you're needed. Right now."

End  
file.